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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the discourse in an informal interview with a 14-year-old, female, Australian high school student takes a feminist poststructuralist perspective, applying concepts from ethnomethodology. In the course of talking about her social world, the subject articulates two distinct discourses of adolescent femininity. As an observable conversational strategy, she speaks sometimes as a quiet, intellectual, academically ambitious schoolgirl, the version of femininity validated by the school she attends. At other times, she comes across as the teenage girl who just wants to have fun, the version of femininity validated by the dance clubs she attends. While talking, the girl takes up subject positions within these contradictory discourses, valuing and discrediting both at different times. Some aspects of her speech suggest that she is seeking a validating voice outside herself, indicating a wish to hear an alternative discourse of femininity in which the brains/beauty dichotomy does not dominate the social reality of adolescent girls. (MSE)

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